

God Gives His People the Commandments of the Law

After the Hebrews crossed the sea, they traveled for a long, long time, looking for the land that God had promised them. On and on they went for many weeks through a land of hot, dry sand. The sun was scorching hot, and the dry desert wind blew all the time.

Sometimes they had no water and no food. At those times the people would grumble: "In Egypt we at least had water and food." However, again and again God helped the Hebrews. In the morning they would find food lying on the ground. This food, which looked like white frost, was called manna. Manna could be gathered and eaten just like bread. Sometimes God sent them lots of small birds that were good to eat. One time when they had no water, God told Moses to strike a rock with his rod. A spring of fresh, clear water flowed from the rock.

Once the Hebrew people stopped to camp at the foot of a great mountain. Then Moses heard God speaking to him: "You shall be My people, and I shall save you from all dangers."

Moses told the people what he had heard, and they all answered together: "All that God says we shall do." Then Moses brought this promise to God, and God answered him: "I shall come to you in a great cloud, so that your people will hear My voice when I speak to you. Tell them to wait at the foot of the mountain and make themselves ready for Me."

So all the people washed their clothes in order to be clean and ready for God. Then they settled down and waited to hear God's voice. Moses told them not to go up the mountain, but to stay where they were.

In the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud covered the top of the mountain. The mountain trembled and shook so that all the people in the camp were frightened.

Moses went up on the mountain. There he listened to God. And God gave him His law—ten rules that all people must obey if they want to be God's people. These rules were written on two flat stone tablets. Moses took the stone tablets with the Law and went down the mountain to bring God's Word to His people.

But do you know what the Hebrew people did while Moses was up on the mountain speaking to God? They had waited and waited for Moses to come down. They became tired and frightened and wanted to do something to feel safe. So they took all the gold and silver they had, melted it, and made a golden statue for themselves. They said this statue was their god and they began praying to it.

When Moses came down and saw this, he was so angry that, he smashed the tablets of the Law that God had given him. He spoke angrily to his people. He even punished them.

Then the people were very sorry indeed and became very much ashamed of themselves. Moses loved them even though they were very foolish, so he went up to the top of the mountain again. He spoke to God and begged Him to forgive His people. God told him to make two new stone tablets and again write on them the ten rules of the Law.